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## **Secret torture sites in Turkey revealed by CORRECTIV-led cross-border investigation**

Turkey is abducting political opponents across the globe and transferring them to Turkish prisons. Several victims now say that they were tortured for months at secret sites in Turkey, so-called ‘black sites’, according to the CORRECTIV-led cross-border investigation #BlackSitesTurkey involving nine international media organizations.

The revelations concerning the kidnapping programme and the black sites are the second major cross-border investigation by CORRECTIV in less than two months, after the “The Cum-Ex Files” revealed the true extent of Europe’s largest tax theft in October. “The issues today are often so large and global that individual journalists and media organizations can no longer cope on their own,” said Oliver Schröm, Editor-In-Chief of CORRECTIV, the German-language region’s first non-profit investigative newsroom.

Other than the #CumExFiles, a number of international team efforts made headlines in 2018, including the #ImplantFiles on medical devices, #FootballLeaks and #ProjectDaphne, in which journalists continued the work of a murdered Maltese journalist, as well as #FakeScience on bogus scientific publications.

“We’re experiencing an historical turning point in investigative journalism, towards big international cooperative ventures,” Oliver said.

CORRECTIV’s media partners vary from investigation to investigation. Some who were part of the #CumExFiles also joined #BlackSitesTurkey. Others, such as Haaretz and El País were new. In Germany, journalists at Frontal21, the investigative programme of public broadcaster ZDF, participated this time. Frontal21 will broadcast on Tuesday, 11 December, 2018 at 9pm CET on #BlackSitesTurkey and will air a 30-minute documentary on ZDF Info on 12 December, 2018, at 7.45pm.

The government of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has ruthlessly suppressed the Gülen movement since the failed coup attempt in July 2016 which he accused followers of Fethullah Gülen of orchestrating. Since then, dozens of Turkish nationals have been detained by local security forces in countries such as Kosovo, Gabon, Sudan, Malaysia, Republic of Moldova and Azerbaijan, handed over to Turkish security forces and repatriated to Turkey.

According to the investigation by CORRECTIV and its partners, two private jets, type Bombardier Challenger, were used in the abductions. They are registered to a Turkish tourism and construction company. The firm is located near the headquarters of the Turkish intelligence service, MIT. One of the jets was twice spotted in Germany recently, in February 2017 on the occasion of the Munich security conference and again in September 2018 in Berlin during the visit of President Erdoğan. Flight radar data confirms the sightings.

The investigation also offers evidence that Turkey uses secret torture sites in its suppression of the Gülenist movement. Two Gülen followers have independently provided testimony that they were interrogated and tortured for months in Turkey.

Both say that they were forced into black vans in broad daylight, beaten, hooded and then driven to secret detention centers. The aim was to extract testimony to be used in trials against the Gülen movement. Both say they were released after they agreed to act as “anonymous witnesses“. They then fled to Europe. The Turkish government did not respond to a request for comment about the accusations.

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